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1233

# RATIONALISM:

*A Treatise for the Times.*

BY G. JACOB HOLYOAKE.

It often happens, that an important principle is vaguely apprehended, and incidentally expressed, long before it is reduced to a definite form, or fixed by regular proof: but while it floats in this state on the surface of men's understandings, it is only of casual and limited utility: it is sometimes forgotten and sometimes abandoned, seldom pursued to its consequences, and frequently denied in its modifications. It is only after it has been clearly established by an indisputable process of reasoning, explored in its bearings, and exhibited in all its force, that it becomes of essential service: it is only then that it can be decisively appealed to both in controversy and in practice, and that it exerts the whole extent of its influence on private manners and public institutions.—SAMUEL BAILEY.

London:

PUBLISHED BY J. WATSON, 5, PAUL'S ALLEY,  
PATERNOSTER ROW.

1845.

Soc 880-145

~~Soc 880.145~~

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*Wolcott fund*

## PREFACE.

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My preface in fact appears on the title page, in those two sentences from Bailey which form a philosophical history of the subject upon which I propose to treat. Briefly let me acknowledge that the basis of Rationalism has, by able writers of the last century and this, been "reduced to a definite form and fixed by regular proof." The works of these authors are in the hands of the public and their arguments so familiar as to preclude the necessity of reiteration here. But though what will appear, a few pages hence, as the first principle of Rationalism, has been "clearly established by an indisputable process of reasoning," it has *not* yet been "explored in all its bearings," *nor* "exhibited in all its force." This treatise is my contribution to this end, in the hope that Rationalism may the sooner "exert the *whole* extent of its influence on private manners and public institutions."

G. J. H.



## RATIONALISM.

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SOME time after becoming acquainted with those sentiments which Mr. Robert Owen has distinguished himself by disseminating, I recast them for my perfect satisfaction—that is, I asked myself *how* I understood them, and *why* I adopted them, and to be sure that what I thought was clear and consonant, I proceeded to reduce my impressions to words. This course led me to the conviction that Mr. Owen's views were capable of a new statement, one that while it diminished nothing of their general application, would more lay hold of individuals, and without curtailing the vast range of his philosophy, subordinate those "vexed questions," which have not a little obscured its attractiveness.

The high title of Rationalism,\* which has been assumed as the designation of Mr. Owen's views (and which can be with modesty retained only as expressive of their aim and tendency†) requires varied support, that the consent of mankind may be won for the appropriation of this lofty distinction. Hence I have long‡ thought it worth constant endea-

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\* "Rational Religionists," is still the official name by which Mr. Owen's friends are known, but discreet usage has long merged it into Rationalists—a briefer term, but of sounder import.

† I thus qualify the meaning of the term *Rationalism*. I should certainly reject the designation if I was understood, as a consequence of its adoption, to consider all *irrational* who differ from me in opinion. If I did so, I ought to be found counselling the erection of universal Lunatic Asylums instead of Community Societies.

‡ See *Movement*, p. 258, article "Notes from the North."

vour to place the "New Views" in a new light. But I wish this attempt to be regarded, as I regard it myself, that if successful, it implies no disparagement on the labours of others. It is the attribute of a great question to be capable of being viewed in many lights, whose variety and yet consistency mutually illuminate each other. Some prefer to examine a subject as through a telescope, at once commanding a view of the bearings of the whole, some look at it as through a prism, enchanted only with the beautiful hues it may present, some only find satisfaction in the scalpel, which lays bare the intricacies hidden from the vulgar eye—but many take Dr. Watts' advice and investigate a topic in all these aspects, and afterwards make the larger enquiry—how does it affect me as a man, or concern me as a citizen of the world? It is this conception of Rationalism which chiefly pervades this treatise. The idea of communism has been adopted from very different reasons. With some, it has sprung from the love of singularity—the rage of system—from the wish for peace, or the desire of plenty—but chiefly it has been embraced as much for its improved metaphysics, as for its benevolent political economy. Socialism, as it was at first termed, addressed itself more to the man than the millionaire—it was far more philosophic than commercial, and sought to elevate human nature as the necessary precursor to improved social condition.

Of course it will not be contended here, nobody ever did soberly contend, that Rationalism is the production of Mr. Owen, or of this age. Its facts and philosophy are from all time, but its systematization owes something to him. The appropriate and high praise of Mr. Owen is, "that out of the mis-shapen block of society, he has hewn the graceful statue of co-operative humanity. A moral Euclid, he has done for society, what that great mathematician did for geometry, collected the scattered wisdom of earth's sages

and given to it order, system, and practical utility."\* But the question is not so much *who* originated the system of Rationalism as *what is it worth?*

If it was at first intended to excite metaphysical discussion, nothing could be better calculated for the purpose than the "Five Fundamental Facts, and Twenty Laws of Human Nature," hitherto known as the "Outline of the Rational System." No one appreciates more highly than myself discussions of this kind, which bring abstruse questions to the level of common apprehension and strip the veil of learned jargon off the great topics of moral and political philosophy. But these investigations are only to be regarded as preparatives to moral conviction and just action—as the great plough of progression which prepares the soil of intelligence for the seeds of Rationalism.

There is reason for a misgiving that this treatise will be considered only as descanting upon a subject with which the public are already familiar. But I find a parry to this imputation in remarks made under somewhat similar circumstances by that Goliath of modern divines, Dr. Paley, whose masculine understanding never fails to delight even those who dissent from his opinions. The doctor says of his *Natural Theology*, that "of the greatest part of those, who, in that book or any other, read arguments to prove the existence of God, it will be said, that they leave off only where they began; that they were never ignorant of that great truth, never doubted it; that it does not therefore appear, what is gained by researches from which no new opinion is learnt, and upon the subject of which no proofs were wanted. Now I answer that, by *investigation*, the following points are always gained, in favour of doctrines even the most generally acknowledged (supposing

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\* *Vide* Address to Mr. Owen on his departure to America, by the Conductors of the Movement.



them to be true) viz. stability and impression. Occasions will arise to try the firmness of our most habitual opinions. And upon these occasions, it is a matter of incalculable use to feel our foundation; to find a support in argument for what we had taken up on authority."

In the face of Mr. Owen's repeated injunction—so largely acted upon by his disciples—to examine for themselves, there would neither be truth nor good taste in assuming that the principles of Rationalism have "been taken up on authority"—but the obscurity thrown around these original principles in excited debates, by unscrupulous opposition and powerful prejudice, may justify a re-examination of the "foundation of their stability." The recent difficulties experienced in conducting our co-operative experiment, may be held as an "occasion likely to try the firmness of our most habitual opinions," warranting the repetition, if it can be had, of a sound "impression."

Because preference shares yield no interest and community scrip finds no purchasers at this particular time, many persons supposed to be well grounded in Rationalism have begun to despond. But that philosophy which is to elevate human nature and be the guide and guardian of virtue, must not fluctuate with a joint stock experiment, it must be higher than public opinion—it must not be shaken by relative success or failure—nor peculiar to any social condition—but fixed as truth, as universal and as enduring.

Rationalism, from one general fact on which it rests, furnishes three inferences addressed to individuals, three to society, and one wise admonition to all.

#### GENERAL FACT.

The opinions\* and actions of men result from their original

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\* The word "opinions," is put before "actions" as being more metaphysically accurate. It is true that, in infancy, we act before we think, but in reflect-

susceptibilities,\* and the external influences which affect them.

#### INFERENCES AFFECTING INDIVIDUALS.

1.—The character of men resulting from their natures,† qualified‡ as their natures may be by direct training, and the general circumstances which surround them, teach that self-knowledge and self-improvement are the primary duties of each person in pursuit of intelligence and happiness.

2.—The conduct of men being necessitated the affairs of life§ are a process—which fact all should remember, that anger may be avoided as only the poor exhibition of ignorance taken by surprise.

3.—Mankind being influenced by external circumstances|| suggests to each individual, variousness of conduct—as every erroneous step will make itself felt; and the same consideration warrants high confidence in just action as *that* can never be lost to the world. This fact imparts energy to character, and makes a man, to a certain extent, master of fate. It teaches him that in the worst circumstances there is hope of amendment or chance of dignity—if he has but wisdom to guide and courage to act. It removes doubt from human endeavour and reduces progression to a science.

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tive life, thought precedes action, and it is reflective life with which rationalism chiefly concerns itself. "Opinions and actions" are employed in the sense in which the word *character* has hitherto been employed—the phrase, "opinions and actions," being more explicit in expressing the elements of which character is made up.

\* The term "susceptibilities" is more intelligible than *organization*, but it is employed to signify what was intended by organization. Mr. Murphy, in his remarkable Essay towards a Science of Conscience, has a clear distinction of things generally, into two classes—powers and susceptibilities. This distinction, observed with respect to organized life and the circumstances which surround it, dispels many clouds of metaphysics. All we know of human nature in reference to morality, is included in the respective qualities of susceptibility and circumstances. A practical knowledge of humanity is a knowledge of the relations these two bear to each other. *Susceptibility* is used in the sense of peculiar liability of impression.

† "Natures" is here employed in the same sense as "susceptibilities" in the General Fact.

‡ This is a coinage as I could find no word fully expressive of what takes place. Each step in the process of character changes the quality of the being—perhaps elevating, perhaps deteriorating. It is not the change so much as the *quality* of the change which concerns us, and which has to be expressed.

§ The phrase "affairs of life" is not employed in its wide sense, but is to be taken as signifying the *personal proceedings* of men.

|| It is not intended here to tacitly deny the influence which the "susceptibilities" spoken of in a preceding fact exercise. This fact is confined to the consideration of the influence of "external circumstances" alone. The same is to be understood of the next fact.

4.—Character and conduct being influenced by external circumstances—including those which precede birth as well as those which operate afterwards—it is the first duty of society to see that these are pure that men may be perfect.

5.—All moral action being generated by constitution and condition\* all crime must result from bad propensity, ignorance, or privation, therefore society will rather *protect* itself against, than revenge itself of crime.

6.—Opinion being dependant on natural capacity† and acquired knowledge—it follows that erroneous opinion is a misfortune only, to be remedied by superior education.

#### GENERAL INFERENCE.

It following from the foregoing facts that the perfection of man depends on the perfection of his organization and the favourable influences operating on him—persons convinced of this truth will make *man, society, and nature generally*, especial objects of study—the better to bring all these relations of humanity into harmony with happiness and progression.

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I shall now repeat these facts seriatimly for the purpose of making a few remarks under each.

#### GENERAL FACT.

The opinions and actions of men result from their susceptibilities and the external influences which *affect* them.

The value of this fact, it may be useful to remark, is dependent on the use to which it is put. In the hands of the tyrant it is a fearful engine, enabling him to mould his subjects into willing myrmidons of his base will. Had Machiavel taken as much pains to establish it as Mr. Owen has done, it would have been unfortunate for mankind. It is only justifiable to inculcate it as a moral agent.

It is not necessary now, for reasons stated in the preface, to argue the truth of this General Fact. It has been ele-

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\* "Constitution and condition" are intended to be understood as synonymous with "susceptibility and circumstance."

† "Natural capacity" is put here still as the reciprocal term of susceptibility.

vated into a truism. Science has accepted it as indubitable. An able Quarterly\* has maintained that "The actions of human beings result from their organic constitution at birth, and the circumstances which influence them during life." Authority has long declared in its favour. Crates acknowledged it when he declared "Pomp is a terrible sophister."—Pope, when he wrote

*Manners with fortunes, humours turn with climes,  
Tenets with books, and principles with times.*

Gray's famous Elegy is a running commentary upon it. Johnson enforced it in part, when he said—"To particular species of excellence men are directed, not by an ascendant planet or predominating humour, but by the first book which they read, some early conversation which they heard, or some accident which excited ardour and emulation." Wilberforce confessed that unfavourable circumstances had converted the gentle Nero into the cruel tyrant; and the gay and generous Timon into a misanthrope. Knight illustrates it to the same extent, in tracing the accurate delineations in Macbeth to Shakspeare's visit to Scotland, and Horace Smith wholly does so in his sketch of Barrington.—"And now, Mr. Barrington," said Alderman Trecothick, in his usual patronising and pompous manner, "allow me, sir, to inquire why, with your education and talents, and gentlemanly deportment, you ever betook yourself to the low and disreputable calling of a pickpocket?" "Will you allow me to ask, Mr. Alderman, why I was ever born a *poor man* with a *rich man's tastes*? Why I ever found myself without a shilling in my pocket while I wanted to spend a guinea? Had you been placed in my situation, and I in your's, will you, can you undertake to say that we should not have changed fates as well as fortunes? Not you! you rich fellows are none of you half grateful enough for the guineas which, by removing

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\* *The Zoist*.

temptation, have saved some of you from the hulks and Botany Bay, and perhaps, from the gallows."

The profligate and the pious alike own the strength of constitution and the power of circumstances, some from bitter experience, some unconsciously. That soldier is an instance of the one, who when charged with "habitual drunkenness," pleaded in extenuation, "habitual thirst," and the Church lady is an example of the other, who protested against her babe being inoculated from a Wesleyan infant, lest her child should grow up a Methodist.

The popular voice owns the omniscient truth of the foregoing principle in that universal proverb—"Necessity is the Mother of Invention,"—a maxim which gives the large authority of the common consent of mankind to the truth that the brightest effects are induced by material causes—for necessity is always material.

Indeed, our General Fact is now the admitted key not only of morals but of metaphysics—"How surely," writes the *Zoist*, "did Iago calculate the effects of the handkerchief on the jealous mind of Othello, the laws of mind being equally fixed and certain as those of the magnet." It is unnecessary to quote at all those eminent continental writers, or those of our own country, who have written in various forms on the great principle in question. Our whole literature has now become one vast dissertation upon it. The *Shilling Magazine* may be taken as a splendid appendix to the *Book of the New Moral World*.

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Will the reader be at the trouble of noticing, that when it is said that, "the opinions and actions of men result from their susceptibilities, and the external influences which *affect* them"—that the word *affect* is italicised. Cognizance of the meaning here intended will save many misunderstandings. When a man owns himself to be influenced by cir-

circumstances, it is currently inferred that he confesses himself a metaphysical weathercock—that if he believe in Priestley to-day, he may in Mahomet to-morrow—indeed, if wedded only to-night, that he may fall in love afresh in the morning. These are improbable expectations. It does not follow that because a man is sure to be influenced by *some* circumstances that he will be influenced by *every* circumstance. It is worth while to notice that many circumstances surround or operate upon us without deciding us—those only assist in forming character which *affect* us. When Pythias consented for six hours to take the place of condemned Damon, that Damon might visit his wife and child,—how mighty were the influences dissuasive of his return—the love of life, of liberty, and home, but they fell as arrows against a rock, his *pledged word* to his generous friend remained an *abiding influence* and brought him back by the appointed moment to the block.

In our first inference it is held, consistently with the statement in the General Fact, that the characters of men have their origin in the natures of men, which natures are only *qualified* by general circumstances. In the third inference, nothing more is asserted than that mankind are *influenced* by the same causes—the same qualification is preserved in the fourth inference. In the fifth “moral action” is affirmed to be generated *equally* by “constitution and condition,” and in the sixth, “opinion” is assumed to be jointly dependent on “natural capacity,” as well as on “acquired knowledge.” No where is this idea obscured or impaired, as an accordance is intended between the Inferences and the General Fact, in which “susceptibility” is given as the ground-work, and “external influence” as the agent which *jointly* generate human character. Either *alone* is barren. Character is the product of *both*. The proportion in which each contributes to this end constantly varies. Human nature may be compared to the earth, and external influence to the sun which

awakens verdure by its beams, in some places generating the giant oak, or towering palm, in others the delicate shrub or the fragrant flower, just as humanity has had its Phocion, and Brutus, its Keats and Tennyson. Sometimes the qualities of the land interfere with the results particularised, sometimes the obliquity of the sun's rays or the duration of its presence above the horizon varies the production of the earth. It is so with human nature. Its degree of susceptibility so varies in different persons that while some are influenced largely, others are influenced little. Every captain of artillery is not prompted into a Napoleon, nor every farmer into a Cobbett. Sometimes the influence itself varies. External circumstances may be powerful or weak — may act too long and produce a morbid result, or too short and produce no result at all. But the wisdom we gather is, that we have to master and modify as far as possible, these external influences, and proportion them to the susceptibility to be affected. We learn that human nature is a soil to be cultured, and that the harvest depends upon our attention and skill. Our colleges rear our scholars and mechanic's institutions multiply our intellectual artisans. Order and certainty are thus introduced into intellectual results, and morality partakes of the nature of a strict science.

Circumstances which precede birth make man's nature *for* him, and circumstances which follow after make his character. It is only in this embrasive sense that man can be said to be the "*creature* of circumstances." But at birth, a change of position takes place—man up till that moment the effect of circumstances now commences to be a cause. Whatever nature he inherits that nature becomes the grand element in his character. All that is or can be implied by the phrase, a man's nature is his peculiar susceptibility. The process of character is this—susceptibility is excited by some external influence, or natural

sensation—this excitement is consciousness,—consciousness is feeling, or thought, perhaps lengthened cogitation—these are the states which lead to action. Our estimate of the chief manifestations that thus result, is called character.

It is necessary to say that a man may know that he shall certainly fall before a given temptation, and yet not be the *creature* of circumstances, in the servile sense of that term. The drunkard may feel his inability to resist the proffered glass, or the man of strong passion may foresee his impending indiscretion, and these cases only prove that their susceptibilities, in these instances overcome, have not been corrected by discipline. In other respects these men may defy fate. Falstaff knew he should flee in battle, but no adverse fortune could subdue his everlasting pleasantries.

On the other hand, a man may reasonably predict that he shall resist the seductions of prosperity or the depression of want, without it following that he has a free will. Brutus declared that "rather than raise money by vile means he would coin his heart and drop his blood for drachmas." The reason was that he had no susceptibility for villany. Death could not subdue him to baseness. His affirmation does not imply that he had a free will, only that he knew well his own stern unbending nature—that he could no more stoop to meanness than Aristides could to injustice.

The term *WILL* misleads us. We think it an ethereal personality sitting within us, on a little throne, deciding cases, when, in fact, the cases are deciding us. When a number of conflicting reasons equally influence us, we naturally hesitate. But when the argument appears to us to be chiefly, or altogether on one side, our feelings are at once inclined there. We acquiesce—acquiescence is will. Will may be defined—susceptibility entirely harmonising with an impression—consciousness stimulated to action. Thus all men are guided to their decisions. No man can be said to have a



*free will* but he who is without human susceptibilities and incapable of distinguishing the weight of evidence.

As soon as a man receives strong and decided impressions upon particular subjects, these impressions become the standards of his judgment—his leading thoughts—his principles of action. By reference to these he decides the questions which come before him. It is the pertinacious influence of these impressions that constitutes his taste. They are the elements of his character. They comprise his chief feelings—he labours for their gratification. They become his favourite sentiments—he strives for their prevalence. These cardinal impressions entering into all his determinations, forming the stays of his intellect and predominating over all his conduct, he, if unreflecting, acquires the idea that he has something within him independent of himself and unamenable to the laws of causation, whereas these phenomena of his feelings are clearly referable to the decided influence over him of some foregone circumstances.

The vulgar impression is, that if circumstances made us what we were at birth, and have since influenced us beyond our controul—then are we the perpetual playthings of fate—that to be the blind instruments of the day is our destiny—that for us to act is as superfluous as it seems impossible. Thus the theory of the formation of character sinks some men into inglorious indifference. They overlook the strong fact, that in the hour when the order of things gave us life we received a nature capable of progressive improvement—that every moment of existence increases our consciousness, our intelligence, and our power. The possession of peculiar susceptibility, of perception and the means of action, constitute individuality and originate influence. We soon learn that though these qualities are not of our making they are of our possession. Though we inherit the dull materials of mediocrity or the happy elements of genius, we soon find that progression depends on culture—that the

weak by exercise are made strong, that vast capacity narrows by disuse. We go into the world's strife resolved to cline the summit of our noblest aspirations—not like the driveller to fluctuate the miserable creature of *all* circumstances, but to warm our unswerving endeavours in the beams of the best influences. Men may find themselves thrown into a crowd of incentives, and still the admonition of the poet is potent—

In the world's broad field of battle,  
In the bivouac of life,  
Be not like dumb driven cattle,  
Be a hero in the strife.\*

It is an important distinction to make that man is not the *slave* but the *subject* of circumstances. Though by nature he renders allegiance to them yet he may be said to choose which he will serve.

The erroneous impression to which I have twice adverted must have become current through some vagueness in the various statements extant, of the question here discussed. The denial of the popular doctrine of free will, no doubt furnished the opinion to the unthinking that Rationalism regarded man but as *mere* clay in the hands of the potter of fate. When Mr. Owen said the character of man resulted from the action of circumstances and the reaction of organization, he virtually expressed the part a man may be said to play in the formation of his own character, but on such a question the sense requires to be more than virtually expressed, it must be obvious, unmistakably obvious, or only a partial perception will be attained where we least expect it.

Mr. Owen's Fifth Fundamental Fact includes the views here generally enforced, as does also the Sixth Section of the First Principles of the Science of Man, but neither those

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\* W. H. Longfellow.

two Facts, nor the illustrations given of them in the *Book of the New Moral World*, are so expressed as to be capable of suggesting to the ordinary reader, the reflections now urged upon his attention.

A short time ago, the writer, in a meeting of very well informed disciples of Mr. Owen, happened to say that "should Harmony utterly fall it would neither shake his principles nor diminish his enthusiasm." The expression was at once objected to as a tacit admission of free will. "E," it was said, "circumstances form your character; you can not say how such an occurrence will affect you, unless you mean that you have power over your own feelings." The assumption on the part of these objectors was clearly that man *was* the creature of every circumstance. For if none can have sufficient confidence in himself to defy an adverse influence, then indeed are we poor feathers of fate, blown about by every caprice of fortune, by every wind of doctrine. Yet these objectors allowed Mr. Owen's statement of the action and reaction of men and things, but made no use of it. They felt it was true, but apparently without seeing in what way. As other men do they must have owned an inward sense of resistance, a conscious individuality, but were not able to give it voice without seeing in it the phantom of free will. They had the "reaction of organization" in theory, but nowhere in practice. How disciplined susceptibility is a source of strength and confidence, and man still remains the subject of circumstances, no one appeared to perceive.

A person declaring himself above a certain influence does not, of course, make an infallible affirmation—the influence after all *may* affect him, but men may speak of their susceptibility to be affected by it, with considerable certainty. It is true that previous to *any kind* of experience no one can foresee how he will be affected by what is totally unknown to him. Macduff felt, on the murder of his children, that his loss could never be conceived by his enemy because *he* "had no

children." But there are a thousand contingent conditions, of which all men have some knowledge, can competently conceive, and with practical accuracy anticipate their effects—without their anticipations, when expressed in words, being any proof of free will. It is only taking advantage of previous experience. Father Matthew may declare that he shall not be successfully tempted to drink a glass of whiskey, and the greatest necessarian in the world feel that considerable truth would pertain to the assertion. When Lord Byron vowed that the torrent of the Hellespont should not subdue him, unquestionably he dreamed nothing of free will inatigating the avowal. No man knew better that

Men are the sport of circumstances, when  
Circumstances seem the sport of them.\*

In swimming over the Hellespont he calculated on his strength, courage and skill. In like manner may all men in moral matters calculate on their endurance, tastes, and intelligence. It is overlooking this, that has led some to decry marriage as unphilosophical, and almost to set up an unqualified defence of fluctuating husbands and wives.

By free will it is meant that of any given number of objects presented to a man's notice he can *choose* which he *likes*. To this Rationalism, says yes—only understand that what a man *likes* depends upon his natural and acquired taste and on the strength of the evidence before him. This simple, yet striking and sound distinction is analogous to that which is to be observed between the popular belief of Mr. Owen's meaning, and that capable of being inferred from his fundamental facts. When he tells us that "man is compelled by his original constitution to receive his feelings and convictions independently of his will"—the meaning, I take it, is not that

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\* Don Juan.

man is the passive recipient of *all* feelings and *all* convictions, but that *such* as he does receive, he receives in the way stated.

Mr. Owen's theory is unshaken by this interpretation. It still is true that men and legislators must look to external influences as the great educators of humanity. Though men, after birth, are not made *every* thing by surrounding circumstances, they are not made *anything* without them. The germs of intelligence and virtue are expanded or blasted by such influences, as *do* affect us.

These views confute the dangerous fallacy of fatalism. Fatalism is blind—philosophical necessity intelligent. The fatalist submits to destiny—the philosophical necessarian moulds it. Every man has means, which, like soldiers, wait his command. The fatalist leaves his troops to disband and supinely relinquishes every chance of victory. The wiser necessarian marshals his forces, challenges fate, and pursues conquest with all his powers.

It would be impossible without enlarging this treatise to a volume, to pursue these disquisitions farther. The principles laid down are capable of solving all the phenomena of human conduct. More particular application must be left to the reader.

#### FIRST INFERENCE AFFECTING INDIVIDUALS.

The character of men resulting from their natures, qualified as their natures may be by direct training and the general circumstances which surround them—teach that self knowledge and self improvement are the primary duties of each person in pursuit of intelligence and happiness.

If men are influenced for good or for evil, as the General Fact asserts, by such circumstances as *affect* them—it is beyond question our interest to see that our situation affords us a chance of advancement. And since this can only be determined by a knowledge of *what* is to be advanced—it

is obvious that we must attain to a knowledge of *ourselves* as an indispensable element in judging of the fitness of things.

This Inference at once directs a man's attention to himself and to education as the sources of dignity and enjoyment. It at once imposes high *personal* duties on the individual—which is the first step in all philosophy. It makes self examination and self improvement primary objects—for principles which do not improve us as individuals are held in vain. It cannot be too often insisted that it is "useless to expect society to advance while no man improves." The first lesson in true education is to send the pupil back to the first moment of consciousness, and thence to trace upwards his thoughts, his experience, the springs of his actions. It is only thus that man can know himself and on no less foundation than this can dignity, virtue, or philosophy be based. Quarles was right—"To mankind is given a common library and to every man a proper book, *himself*; being an abridgment of all others." Taking the same profound view of human advancement, well did the Turkish Spy exclaim "What is nature but one great library; every volume in which and every page in these volumes is impressed with the radiant characters of wisdom, yet are all the perfections of the universe contracted with such inimitable art in man that he needs no other book but himself to make him a complete philosopher." Hence it is that self knowledge becomes the key stone of the arch of intellect. With this foundation intellectual acquisition is not only the minister to capacity but also the means of moral elevation.

#### SECOND INFERENCE AFFECTING INDIVIDUALS.

The conduct of men being necessitated, the affairs of life are a process—which fact all should remember, that anger may be avoided as only the poor exhibition of ignorance taken by surprise.

The irritation which mars domestic life and public intercourse, requires to be put under an everlasting ban. It only needs the single reflection that the affairs of men "are a process," that they have a necessary rise—an undeviating order and a certain consummation, to prepare us to meet disappointment with equanimity. It must be that the million aims of mankind, arising from a million different sources and taking a million devious ways, perpetually thwart our separate projects. To be angry is to be puerile. Twelve reflective months teach that opposition is to be expected. The cure of chagrin is hardly so well deducible from metaphysics as from common sense. But this same fact which prepares us for disappointment protects us against it. Seeing that the conduct of men is necessitated and human affairs a process, we see that we can calculate on their course—perhaps turn the opposition from us, or in the last extremity fit our plans for the contingency of contact. Thus we triumph where before we fell, and by the happy counsel of reason, gain at once moral strength and worldly advantage.

It has been argued that viewing man as the creature of circumstances disarms anger, but I confess that such a consideration has always failed to influence me. I like the physical hurricane no more than the moral tempest. The stone that obstructs my path I hate as much as the man that stands in my way. One hates such things not as stones or as men, but as obstacles. It is said that overcoming what we hate, we proceed to revenge. But as no one in his senses troubles himself about the block that no longer hinders him, so none but the tyrant pursues the enemy he has subdued. To suppose that the idea that an opponent has a free will, will incense a man, is to suppose men forgetting natural equality and mutual respect—it is to assume that men are natural despots to each other. If a man oppose me—supposing his opposition to proceed from free will—still he is my equal, and has as much right to differ from

me of his own free will, as I have to differ from him. To require him, therefore, to succumb, or to coerce him, except in the name of society, and on the ground of utility, is tyrannical. This consideration, with just men, is, alone, of more weight, than all the arguments metaphysics ever furnished.

### THIRD INFERENCE AFFECTING INDIVIDUALS.

Mankind being influenced by external circumstances suggests to each individual wariness of conduct—as every erroneous step will make itself felt—and the same consideration warrants high confidence in just actions as that never can be lost to the world. This fact imparts energy to character and makes a man, to a certain extent, master of fate. It teaches him that in the worst circumstances there is hope of amendment, or chance of dignity—if he has but wisdom to guide or courage to act. It removes doubt from human endeavour and reduces progression to a science.

It has often been asked what morality does modern Rationalism inculcate. This fact is the answer—it is a code in itself. The idea of an all-seeing Providence watching the conduct of men, has not half the effect and none of the dignity which the assurance this fact imparts. An Almighty Policeman keeping perpetual surveillance above, converting the world into a vast penitentiary and we frail and unhappy mortals into wretched prisoners, so sunk in moral degradation as never to be worthy of a moment's trust, is as gloomy as it is debasing. But from the higher philosophy of Rationalism a man learns that in no obscurity is he hidden—that in no remoteness is he lost—that unseen or unknown, no thought, or word, or act is effectless—that his doings never tell for society's advancement or his own deterioration. If he will be a worm he knows he shall leave behind the slimy tract marking his grovelling course—but pursuing useful objects he may like the stars shed a lustre over the earth. It is a great thing for a man to feel that whenever he is in despair, in destitution, that the influence of right



doing is in the very constitution of things conserved—that no fate can rob him of dignity without his own consent—that in this iron world, in its cold selfishness and dark distrust—in its narrowest circumstances, there is hope, if there be effort, and chances of happiness within his grasp. This aspect of things is full of strength and nobility.\* It is virtue founded, not on fear but on intelligence—assuring us that *well in some shape ever waits on well*,† and sends the salutary conviction of Macbeth stealing over us, that—

Even-handed justice  
Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice  
To our own lips.

Diet, dress, temperance, exercise, locality, associates,  
("for wise bearing or ignorant carriage are alike infecticus")

\* If these views, and those deducible from the two preceding "Inferences affecting Individuals," had been generally enforced we should not have had a distinguished advocate of Rationalism expressing in 1845, "serious doubts as to the good effects of all the Society's preaching for several years past."—*See New Moral World*, No. 57, Vol. 13, p. 65.

† I guard this expression lest I be found giving currency to an erroneous estimate of the natural rewards of meritorious conduct. When "honesty is" said to be "the best policy," the particular sense in which it is true should be specified, or some one will act upon the unguarded instruction and suffer thereby, and suffering forsake all honesty and present to men an unhappy pretext for duplicity. If honesty was rewarded in the widest sense, Swift would not have died a dean, nor Woolston perished in prison. "Fidgion Paley," would have been a bishop, and Leigh Hunt have escaped persecution. Notwithstanding honesty can never be safely disregarded and has its own peculiar reward. "It is," says a judicious thinker, "to be recommended on its own proper ground *the conscious independence it gives*." Probity secures self-respect—but little commercial advantage. It is a diamond among the virtues but perhaps the most unprofitable commodity in the market, and a man who takes it there will gain more esteem than cents, and of this he should be well aware. When genius is improvident and talent squanders its means, and come to want, they often reproach society for what arose in their own mistakes. Genius will purchase distinction and talent command admiration, but neither necessarily supplies all the prudence which the safe conduct of life requires. Every enjoyment has its appropriate price. In the ordinary course of things only temperance will purchase health, only honesty will give dignity, only economy will ensure competence, only assiduity will achieve eminence. When Mark Antony said to one with whom he conversed, "who tells me true, though in his tale lie death I hear him, as he flattered," he uttered a sentence worthy the throne of Cæsar. But this nobility of thought could not alone secure the empire of the world. That needed vigilance as well as fortune and ability, and Antony was sunk in indolence and enervated by dalliance and luxury. Every success has its distinctive approach—every merit its peculiar reward. The mistake lies in looking for all benefits to flow from one desert. Hence the expression that "*well in some shape ever waits on well*."

habit, the great agent by which society is governed, all are circumstances coming under the critical cognizance of our omniscient fact. It brands *beware* on every vice—on the insidious and palpable. It is present in all states and admonishes all conditions. It serves alike the mighty and the low—the state and the individual—it is the wise mentor, the friend, the companion of all.

By religious systems when men did well we knew not why, save and except by reference to God's good grace, which however good, was always fleeting and uncertain, and as Falstaff said of Mrs. Quickly's meaning, "no one knew where to have it." But in Rationalism one can trace integrity to its source and noting the influences which nurtured it, mark its ascension in a mathematical line, and foretell its culmination with the accuracy of an astronomical calculation.

#### FIRST DEDUCTION BELONGING TO SOCIETY.

Character and conduct being influenced by external circumstances (including those which precede birth as well as those which operate afterwards) it is the first duty of society to see that these are pure that men may be perfect.

The department of government is distinct. The duties of society extend over a wider range than those of individuals. Society in its collective capacity must be addressed as to its duties, in any complete code of morals. Bad example may exist—contaminating influences may be perpetuated from age to age, over which individuals have little or no control. The state is here admonished that the character of its people is to a great extent in its hands. Political institutions when good generate life, verdure, and beauty in the moral world—but when bad, they blight like the *sirrocco* and scar like the blast, generating only dreariness, desolation and death. Individuals have care chiefly of themselves, society of posterity. That ancient sage should ever be present to us who wept over a glorious city which was

anxious for its renown and its wealth, but took no care of the generation of its children to whom its reputation and its possessions must one day descend. Parents and legislators have large responsibilities.

#### SECOND DEDUCTION BELONGING TO SOCIETY.

All moral action being generated by constitution and condition, all crime must result from bad propensity, ignorance or privation—therefore society will rather *protect* itself against, than *revenge* itself of crime.

Society is here counselled to use its vast powers wisely. Constitution may be improved—condition may be amended, bad propensity may be corrected, ignorance may be instructed, and privation may be alleviated—thus society can protect itself from injury, and every penal conviction that takes place is an imputation at once on our wisdom and our humanity. No man sensible of the benefits of society ever lifted his arm against it, unless illused, or neglected by society. The murderers would not have struck at Banquo and Fleance, had not the “vile blows and buffets of the world, in which they had tugged with fortune in vain, incensed them to recklessness.”

Nothing can be viler in a moral point of view, than our present system of criminal policy. Instead of reforming men by reason, the state appeals to their coward fears. Nature asks philanthropy for the unfortunate, and government gives a Model Prison. I speak from some experience of prison discipline, and hesitate not to declare that excepting those cases in which men agree to suffer for politics or principle, no man (were men brave) would deliberately incur the risk of imprisonment. They would never suffer the police to seize them alive. Death is a far less infliction than one morning in our gaols.

Recently even Sir James Graham compelled the Berkshire Magistrates to adopt an improved dietary, in their gaol.

Those functionaries reasoned "that since the paupers in the poor house did not taste meat from year's end to year's end, the gaol diet ought not to be improved, as it would be offering a premium for crime." The *Times* said "then raise the dietary of the poor." But it was soon discovered that if this was done, paupers would fare better than the industrious artizan out of door, and that would be offering a premium for idleness. Thus, while the present order of things continues, we have no mode of punishing crime other than by "murdering our prisoners by the process of starvation."<sup>\*</sup>

What would be said if Sir Robert Peel, out of pure wantonness and tyranny, should send a posse of police into every street and take a child from one house, a mother from a second, a father from a third, and doom them to the mines of Siberia, or to a miserable death? Why even women, as they did in Paris in 1793, would bare the red arm of war, and men would go mad for revenge. Yet does not society do this daily? Did our police ever seize a poor wretch whom a kinder fate might not have made virtuous? Does not society leave men in ignorance and punish them for their error? And what awaits those whom neglect has made guilty? Is Siberia worse than Norfolk Island, or Tasman's Peninsula? What said the *Illuminated Magazine* a few months ago—

"We fill our prisons, and then discharge their branded inmates into our penal settlements, to endure sufferings the most dreadful, and which stigmatize justice with the malignity of *revenge*."

"Why should we seek only to degrade where we might instruct, and punish where we might reward?"

"We dare not pretend to prescribe the form of the remedy for these mighty evils. We feel their existence and their influence, and must raise our voice for their redress."

But rationalism *dare* do any thing that it becomes reason to do, and it proclaims its remedies in the same voice that

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<sup>\*</sup> *Times*, June 29, 1842.

publishes its complaints. Nevertheless, it is well to record the wrong—it is only more to venture upon the redress.

During political convulsion or social disorganization how often does hypocrisy in ermine tell us of the increase of depravity, and of hopeless efforts to suppress commotion and crime when it must be known that if honest industry could live in this age of knowledge, that peace would prevail, intelligence proceed, morality increase, and crime die.

### THIRD DEDUCTION BELONGING TO SOCIETY.

Opinion being dependent on natural capacity and acquired knowledge, it follows that erroneous opinion is a misfortune only to be remedied by superior education.

It is now acknowledged by our chief judges—almost the last persons whom reason reaches—that not only opinion but even its expression, after a certain manner, are free. More words therefore need not be employed in arguing the first point. But as many conscientious persons hesitate to mingle with those holding obnoxious opinions, it may be useful to represent to them, as this deduction does, that no opinion implies criminality in the holder, and that if erroneous it may be corrected.

Whether the expression of all opinion ought to be free is a question of utility, and to be argued on grounds not relevant for discussion in this place. The mode specified in the above fact is the only one of remedying error, but it may be put down by persecution under some circumstances. Give me the law (the common law) at my disposal and I would undertake to put down any opinion, true or false—if the holders happen to be cowards. I should not convince these persons, that I do not promise, but I should prevent their sentiments being spread. But where the holders of an opinion will dare any thing in its advocacy the allied armies could not, in these days, put it down.

Unfortunately, though acknowledged by the judges, freedom of opinion is not yet recognized by English law. Neither

anti-theological sentiments nor the holders are safe. The opposition to opinion might be borne if it did not extend to the propagators. On my return from Gloucester I was coolly told at a public meeting in Lawrence Street, Birmingham, that it was not I who had been persecuted but my opinions. I contented myself with rejoining, that in such case, on the next occasion, I hoped that Mr. Justice Erskine would imprison my sentiments and not me.

In leaving these inferences it is proper to say that I rather allude to, than illustrate them. The age and body of the time is their daily commentator. These pages can only be the finger posts of their paths.

#### GENERAL INFERENCE.

It following from the foregoing facts that the perfection of man depends on the perfection of his organization and the favourable influences operating on him—persons convinced of this truth will make *man*, *society*, and *nature generally* especial objects of study, the better to bring all the relations of man into harmony with happiness and progression.

The General Fact put first in the preceding series, and the inferences and deductions therefrom, constitute rationalism. The consequents of the theory of the formation of character may be multiplied much more, but sufficient have been adduced to give individuality to the system.

Rationalism, as our General Inference implies, defines what men should study, and for what purpose. It sends man to *man*, to *society*, and the *external world* for wisdom to be applied for the promotion of happiness and progression. Co-operation, Equality, are prizes to be won by reason. The world is the great amphitheatre of action, humanity the spectators, and Rationalism trains up the combatants, furnishes them with weapons, and takes care that nothing is victorious but truth. The abolition of private property and the establishment of equality are understood characteristic sentiments of

modern rationalists. They are so, but these are their speculations, not their philosophy. The late Richard Carlile truly affirmed, in his review of Mr. Owen's projects, that his "Book of the New Moral World" had no relation whatever to the questions of equality and community of property. These are great questions, and of vast import to mankind, but they are conjectures as yet, and are not to be confounded with that philosophy which has its rise in the immutable order of things, and is applicable to all men and all states of society.

The aim of Rationalism is to *fit* men to work out their improvement, not to *fetter* them as to the mode of doing it. It says—circumstances are plastic, and the rough edges of destiny may be rounded off, hence courage—"the errors of mankind arise from want of knowledge rather than the defects of goodness"—hence confidence and love. Thus it arms men for the struggle of right with heroism and good nature. Its great lesson is—circumstances are the agents of fate! look to them! But *what* circumstances—whether co-operation and equality, it leaves to intelligence, to discussion, and experiment to determine. The "science of circumstances" embraces *all* circumstances. It first analyses them and holds itself free to adopt or reject any as utility shall determine. It is a philosophy that ever works for man's improvement, its principles preclude the possibility of despair.

RELIGION.—Rationalism invalidates many of the popular tenets of the day, and some deductions from its first principle are *hard* to be reconciled with religion, and this circumstance, more than the novelty of its political economy, has retarded its progress in society. It is necessarily discourteous to popular error. Drivelling pusillanimity would it be for rationalists to ask their neighbours whether they

are to profess this creed or that, or believe or not in God. The writer takes Rationalism to be the science of *material* circumstances. Rationalism advises what is useful to society without asking whether it is religious or not. It makes morality the sole business of life, and declares that from the cradle to the grave man should be guided by reason and regulated by science. It looks on man, to all practical purposes, as a purely material being—other systems have chiefly spiritualised him. It would have been well if they had spiritualised his miseries, but they have only refined into nothings his happiness, and left his wrongs and wretchedness solid, material, and enduring. Rationalism does not regard man through the distorting spectacles of theology, which reveals only wounds, bruises, and putrifying sores, but discovers in humanity the germs of indefinite moral progression, which the genial influences of truth, love, and justice will develope, and intelligence nourish for ever.

Serious responsibility rests upon those who direct our suffering artizans to look to external aid for relief. If misery has an audience in heaven help always comes from ourselves, and this divinity itself now perceives. During the agitation against the Factory Education Bill I was present in Vicar Lane School Room,\* Coventry, and saw acted there a most useful piece, one performed simultaneously in every town in the kingdom. The Rev. J. Watts warned a pious, and enraptured audience in these words—“*Nothing* can prevent this Bill being passed but the universal shout of indignation from all Dissenters. We must *depend upon ourselves*. Our own deliverance must come from our own right arms.” It is obvious that were any practical results obtainable by faith, this “shout of indignation” might have been saved these Dissenters. Any “two or three” might have “met together,” and a certain person would have been “in the midst

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\* May 16, 1843.



of them, and that to grant their request." The Rev. J. Watts furnished another illustration of Dr. Johnson's maxim, that it is adversity that discovers on what principles a man relies. He appealed to human endeavours, to their "own right arms." By those means the Dissenters then succeeded. Had they left the matter to heaven Sir James Graham would have carried his Bill. This is a practical lesson of great value to Reformers. In this instance divinity was doubtless sobered by danger. Rationalism is always sober.

Calculating on supernatural aid begets an indifference to self exertion, and a habit of dependence on others. Rationalists are averse to this. Some admit the first premiss of religion, but those who do so, are distinguished by the *liberal* interpretation they adopt of the duties thence arising. They seem to agree with Horace, that—

A fat and costly Sacrifice  
Is not the *welcom'*st Tribute to the Skies,  
They're (the Gods) more delighted with the small expense  
Of Honesty and Innocence.

I conceive the true profession of rationalists to be morality. It is their just and gratifying distinction to be incited only by moral considerations. Hector could frame no higher eulogy than that

Without a sign—his sword the good man draws  
And asks no omen but his country's cause.

Is not this enough. What serves us so well as morality. We have all heard how, in the Great Britain Street Lying-in Hospital of Dublin, that, owing to improper ventilation, one child in every six died within nine months of its birth. The remedy of this would formerly have been attempted by prayer, but human means being resorted to, and the ventilation improved, the number of deaths was reduced to one in twenty, which supposing 120 to be born there yearly was an annual saving of fourteen lives.

We have read with gratitude in Scripture history of a prophet who raised the Shunnamite widow's son, but here

common sense was equal to fourteen Elijahs. A high recommendation of human appliances. It is no disparagement to Rationalism to be told that it is opposed to Christianity—the first rule of arithmetic is. In this respect Rationalism fares no worse than the arts and sciences. For saying so much some will accuse me of wanting regard to their feelings and had I said less they would have charged me with a desire to mislead them by concealment.

Christians are apt to judge persons who differ from them as they used to do witches, whose ordeal was to be thrown into water, where if they swam they were sentenced to be burnt and if they sank they were drowned. So now, frankness is esteemed an outrage—and silence, cowardice or hypocrisy. The alternative to be chosen is plain, as truth is dishonored by being suffered to wear the semblance of dissingenuousness. Mankind are not served by being cheated into the right. It does dishonor to truth to advance it by crooked means. It has pride and disdains to beg a mendicant admission at our doors. It would rather hide, as of old, at the bottom of a well. He who has truth has a jewel, and needs not hawk it about for vulgar acceptance.

There is a popular objection to the embracement of Rationalism which perhaps ought to be noticed here. Rationalism it is said though very well to live by is not well to die by—as though a reasonable life could be a disqualification for death. When Laval, the famous French usurer, was in his last fitful struggle, his priest in the hope of reducing him to the level of piety, presented before him a silver crucifix. The experiment failed—for Laval who had always an eye to business, surveyed the cross with minute attention and coolly said "*Sir, I can only lend you a very small sum on such a pledge as that.*" Since usury can depart in indifference, surely philanthropy may be able to die in peace.

But the end of the Christian affords stronger encouragement to confide in Rationalism. Our picture shops parade

the death bed of Addison, who sent for his nephew to see "with what *peace* a christian could die." This man's chief merit consisted, in his being the author of the most polished intolerance in our language. He gave\* a jocular account of "Casimir Lysynsky a gentleman of Poland, who was executed for the *crime* of Atheism, his body burned and his ashes shot out of a cannon towards Tartary." He declared this "audacious kind of martyrdom to have something in it *proper enough* to the nature of Lysynsky's *offence*" and proposed "that two or three cannons be kept ready in order to shoot out unbelievers," and, in default of his plan being adopted, he thought that "the best way of dealing with the *miscreants* was—to retort scorn and mockery." With these diabolical sentiments (to which it is probable both Woolston and Annett owed their wretched fate) uncanceled and unrecanted, Addison sent for the young Earl of Warwick to see "with what peace he could die." After this exhibition by this paragon christian, what have the upright to fear?

CO-OPERATION is a vast problem—yet to be solved in its societarian sense, on this side the Atlantic. It has yet to be determined whether it will suit the genius of the English people. But the solution is a question of time only, not of probability, for the probability is all in its favour. It is what the *Times* has designated the "natural offspring of the age." It is an attempt to annihilate wrong on grand scale. "It comes to relieve the heart sickening strife of competition's grossness. It is the embodiment of the popular hope of happiness, and constitutes in its finer forms the poetical dream of bliss.†"

In present society the chances of happiness are woefully unequal. The mass are only pasture for the fortunate to feed on. The rich have often more enjoyment in one week than the poor in twelve months. Some by virtue of birth,

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\* *Spectator* vol. 5, No. 389.

† *Movement* No. 7.

title, fortune, or education can advance. Mere merit has few opportunities. Co-operation is a scheme for giving *all* a chance.

From *Chambers' Journal* upward, the iron and obstinate principles of political economy have blended themselves with such as are more consonant with the wants of the age. Distinguished thinkers begin to feel "thoroughly assured that co-operation is the lever by which the great mass of the community shall be eventually raised."<sup>\*</sup> No details are pledged but the general acceptancy of the principle is perfect, nothing is wanted but the same currency of opinion for some mode of its application.

The difficulties which have retarded the consummation of the Harmony experiment in England have been pecuniary. The plans of its principal directors had no worse fault than that of being *prematurely* splendid.<sup>†</sup> Those who have criticised proceedings there, have never ascribed its difficulties to any more fatal cause than that of *ill-timed* expenditure. But a very temporary discouragement this! Gas, steam vessels, railway companies, have met with the same disasters and far greater delay—and what are their projects compared with the community scheme, which is world making on a small scale. *They* illuminate a town, cross a channel, or intersect the land—*communities* seek to renovate the social state, recast and elevate humanity.

Community success will perhaps be slow of achievement because Rationalism dictates that it must be honourab'le. Men who will not stoop to crooked paths will often find obstacles, but they will gather enduring strength, and win enduring honor by overcoming them. That would be cold utilitarianism which would rule every step by its market value, and make the *London Gazette* the measure of human dignity. If commercial success is made primary, manly

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<sup>\*</sup> W. J. Fox—Lecture 13 to the Working Classes.

<sup>†</sup> Visit to Harmony Hall.

bearing will be secondary. Honourable men often acquire riches. Men who will but be mean enough always may—but for the *certainty* who would pay the price? Integrity must stand first—co-operative success next.

"Tis manhood makes the man  
A high-souled freeman or a fettered slave;  
The mind a temple fit for God\* to span,  
Or a dark dungeon grave.

In order to anticipate a crowd of objections which only have weight because they are not generally allowed, it is premised hereby that the writer does not hold community to be without its disadvantages. Many of the objections urged against it are relevant. But from a comparison of the evils of the two states of society—the present and the proposed one, the new state is greatly to be preferred. To allow disadvantages—is not to disparage on the whole. However conscious that two pieces of currency, of gold and silver, have a common alloy, we never hesitate to choose the sovereign in preference to the shilling.

EQUALITY, another grand adjunct of Rationalism, is at present like human perfection—though something to be always aimed at—still a dream. Its realisation is prospective, and must be held to be distinct from fixed first principles. The present communist projectors of England have long been unequal in influence. Some have subscribed only a few pounds, and some thousands of pounds. I here raise no voice against capital. I have no antipathy to rich men. I wish we were all rich. But capital has influence, it ought to have it, but its influence, however just, commercially, is incompatible with equality. It is held that its employment is the only step to equality. It may be so, but it commences by destroying it. With equality goes all my sympathies, but I wish it to be understood in its

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\* I must not be supposed to have changed my creed, because I quote these lines from *Nichel*. It would be sectarian to reject a good thought because a little deteriorated by divinity,

true relation to Rationalism. It is the polar star of progression, and saying it is yet to be realised is not to diminish, but to stimulate earnest endeavour.

In stating equality to be a dream, will it be objected that I represent Mr. Owen as a dreamer. He is a dreamer. But it is no disparagement to say a man dreams, provided he dreams well. Mr. Owen has dreamed gloriously for humanity. Equality is a splendid reverie.

IRRESPONSIBILITY has confounded the public and most unnecessarily alarmed them. Connected with Rationalism it is a very subordinate question. Of irresponsibility it is only necessary to say, that society has rights and must protect itself in the exercise of them, and that it will, against the opposition of retractory members, whether free-will, or necessity prevails. Metaphysical disquisitions on this topic are doubtless useful as a discipline, but of little practical utility. The example of Zeno was worth all the arguments on this subject. On his servant being detected in a theft and excusing himself by saying "It was his *destiny* to steal," "*and to be beaten*" added Zeno, thrashing at the same time the sophistical knave.

Vain is the fear that abstract speculation on this theme will set aside the great instinct of human nature. It has been argued that if we are irresponsible, men ought not to punish the criminal. But if we *are* responsible, men ought not to *punish*. The theory of utility now recognised by all civilized governments admits this. Society has no moral right to do more than *protect* itself—to prevent as easily and humanely as possible the commission of crime. It is obscuring the elements of just action to say that man has a right to punish under *any* circumstances. Only the ignorant, the savage and the tyrannical wantonly inflict pain. The act of self preservation is not punishment. There is no intention of malignity there. It is strict defence. Rationalism investigates this question as it does others,

without being answerable for diversity of opinion respecting it.

PRAISE and BLAME are the natural expression of likes and dislikes—which are instincts of human nature,\* and as long as they remain so it is hypocrisy to conceal them. To withhold praise or blame is to freeze affections, and to convert men into cyphers, or reduce them to stocks and stones. Not to praise what is virtuous is to act as though we did not know what is good, and not to blame erroneous conduct is not to do our duty. No view of man as influenced by circumstances alters the natural propriety of conduct.†

Various opinions prevail on this topic which are not chargeable on Rationalism as a system. Rationalism encourages all examination but does not dictate all sentiments. An audience of English Communists who eschew praise and blame, are as free from animation as Egyptian mummies. They are very obliging but are very mute. Truth and falsehood, right and wrong, are received by them with the same respectful attention. This is far more agreeable than the indiscriminate applause so common and so disgusting in public meetings—still judicious approval and discreet reprehension, would be more human and more useful. Serious attempts have been made to dispense with censure and approval, and the curious anomaly has been exhibited of praising those who do not praise, and blaming those who blame. The first number of the *New Moral World* down to the last address from the residents at Queenwood ‡ illustrate the inconsistency of the theory.

MARRIAGE has been a fruitful topic of misunderstanding. That it is greatly useful to reconsider this relation of the

\* "Book of the New Moral World," chap. 3, par. 5.

† The tremendous truth here recognised does not alter the nature of things. As long as human nature is human nature, moral attraction and repulsion will exist—winning love or inducing hatred according to the strength of the feelings acted upon.—*Mrs. Leman Grinstone*

‡ *New Moral World*, No. 51, June 14, 1845.

sexes is beyond doubt. That our laws of divorce need revision nobody successfully questions. But the contract or relation of marriage, whether legally ratified or not, rather wants contracting than relaxing. Rationalism so far as it has identified itself with this question, has chiefly contended for the removal of that ignorance which leads to so many mistakes in match making, of those pecuniary considerations which make love sordid, and the alteration of woman's present dependent state, which renders the parties uniting socially unequal. Promiscuity is a sensual dream, against which good taste, delicacy, and true affection revolt. Such a scheme is never likely to meet encouragement by intelligent and refined people. The relation of marriage will not for a long time be publicly understood. Licentiousness on the one hand and prudery on the other, forbid. One portion of the public would abuse the discussion of it, and another portion would grow horrified at it. This subject no more than others, will ever be estimated truly until experience, instead of theory, is brought to illustrate it. Chaste ingenuity could not be better exercised, than by fully treating so important a relation of life, without wounding—what ought never to be wounded—true modesty.

It has been argued that the doctrine of circumstances has contributed to undervalue marriage, and to encourage a lax estimate of the natural duration of it. If true, this is to be greatly regretted. It can only have arisen by an imperfect knowledge of Rationalism, or by a perversion of it. What is more likely than that a man should be trained in strong, pure and enduring tastes? What more probable than that by that reflex examination of himself, which Rationalism makes his duty and his interest,\* he should know well his nature, likings and aversions? What more easy than that a person about to unite in marriage, should entreat of his

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\* See Inference 1, page 9.



intended partner a similar retrospect of life and taste? With their mutual training before, their eyes—the history of their experience and education of their susceptibilities, under the manifold influences through which they had passed—is it possible, that if at all skilled in reading human nature, they could greatly mistake their respective fitness for each other's society? Bearing in recollection what has been said in another place of the natural strength of educated susceptibilities, does it stand to reason that two persons uniting under the circumstances supposed, would be found longing for separation every new moon, or sighing after a new partner in every ball room? Moral intimacies are not thus dissolved—they are attachments that mere beauty could not sever, and beauty united with worth would be no willing party in endangering it, if the possibility should appear.

Community has no designs upon women.\* It is only sensuality that regards them as common. Any one woman in her own individuality and experience is unlike all others. A man possessing the love of an honourable and intelligent woman, has a priceless treasure worthy of constant preservation in the casket of his affections. Are we to be told when individuality is appreciated, that a man will weigh his wife as nothing against a wanton's smile? But speculation on this subject is every day becoming less necessary. Individual cultivation will soon put down licentiousness, and as women approach to independence of position, they will recast the relations of love.

Parties who have to form a second union generally prove that in making their first they were very ignorant, or very indiscreet. It proves that one or both, just as the truth of the case may be, was or were somewhere in the wrong. A separation between man and wife is, except in a very few cases, a sign of fickleness or foolishness, and should be un-

\* The communion of goods is a truth, but community of wives is a lie; for women are not property.—*Goodwyn Barbery*.

derstood as such. It is not Rationalism, it is not the doctrine of the influence of circumstances which teach otherwise. Rationalism reduces morality to a science and teaches, and it alone teaches, how affection may be won and unions made permanent.

Love cannot always be rendered subordinate to reason, and in the wisest, love, or rather insatiation has triumphed over reason—for no sentiment can justly be designated by the expressive and protective name of love while it acts unreasonably. *Sometimes*, unforeseen events, contingencies for which, at the time of union, no calculation could be made, will arise and render the alliance an unhappy one and make divorce a moral step. It is against these exigencies that rational divorce provides. Intelligent society will never look upon divorces lightly. They are never to be regarded but as evidences of misfortune or weakness.

CHARITY is one of those sentiments which, in mistaken good nature, has been deduced from the theory of necessity. Eleemosynary aid may be entitled to this epithet, but in matters of opinion we surely are not entitled to treat our fellow men as mendicants. Charity ever implies to confer a favour and impose an obligation. Permit me distinctly to repudiate any intention of applying this term to the treatment of opinion. In treating another man's sentiments with respect I only treat them with that decency to which I conceive my own entitled—and surely my acting equitably as I ought confers no favour on another. Neither does he who concedes my perfect right to my opinions and to my mode of expressing them, impose upon me any obligation. Who made him the patron of my conscience and licenser of my tongue? I have the same right to my opinions and expressions as he has to his. Charity is as odious as toleration, yet we are perpetually admonished to treat those who differ from us with charity. Such advice assumes the sense of justice and fair dealing to be dead within us.

FORBEARANCE is of the same category. It implies that some right to employ severity is waived. No right among honourable men ever existed even in imagination. Sound Rationalism teaches that we should seek to humble no one by our pride, nor offend a brother by affected superiority.

It would be impossible in the limits which I have prescribed for this book to take up a tithe of the questions which have been agitated in connexion with Rationalism, but the few I have introduced are sufficient to illustrate the distinction between the theory of Rationalism and the questions popularly connected with it. Rationalism and Communism are compatible though distinct things. The theory of the influence of circumstances may seem in no way to suggest the science of co-operation—still this valuable connexion subsists between them. Rationalism furnishes the grounds of confidence in the material appliances, for the promotion of virtue and prosperity, which constitute the distinguishing trait of the Communistic plan. Rationalists are pledged to try the great question of community, and doubt not that they will satisfy mankind on the subject. But the political economy of the new state of society depends on other facts and deductions than those which in the early part of this treatise have been discussed. Upon its political economy Rationalists can with reason answer those who question. I do not enter upon it only because it does not comport with my design to do so here.

Rationalism is an independent system applicable to man in all states and all times, and independently of the betterance of physical condition—of which it gives valuable assurances—its principles are calculated to elevate those who adopt them. Rationalism cannot fail for it has personally succeeded. The diffusion of its principles is yet destined to work a proud change in society. The Branches in our several towns have a wide sphere of action, and great duties

to perform apart from the advocacy of communism. A sense of this is restoring the enthusiasm which was formerly so distinguished among them, and enthusiasm thus founded in a deep sense of the moral elevation to be effected by their exertions, will know no decay. Branch A1—no mean judges of this question—to whom lately these views were briefly explained, bore ready testimony to their general soundness.\* A short time since I visited a famous Branch in Warwickshire, which had been so little accustomed to this application of their principles, that the London confectioners might have selected their institution for an ice house where frigidity was permanent all the year round. But I left them with a warmer appreciation of the embrasive tenets.

It is a great recommendation that Rationalism is of present application. No system can succeed which is not of immediate use. Even the populace see that the future depends upon the present. Though we were on the eve of the most glorious change, it would be true wisdom to let go no jot or tittle of present advantage, or satisfaction. To well use and enjoy the present is both policy and profit. Policy because no future day will yield us back that which we now may lose. Profit because he who is accustomed to employ the present well will be best fitted to reap advantage in the future. It was the best recommendation of Lucilius to Antony that he had served Brutus well.

Rationalism, in some one or other of its possible deductions, or in the tone of thought which it imparts, leads to the recasting of many popular questions. Where was depravity in human nature it reveals to us the germs of goodness—in the world, said to be under a ban, it shows us unequivocal signs of progression. It has made rational pleasantries a permanent element of the human character. The theory of reformation it revises, and established fraternity

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\* *New Moral World*, May 24, 1848.

upon lasting and universal principles, seeking to unite all hearts and blend all interests. Rationalists are free to mingle among all parties, and to identify themselves with what they approve, no vile prejudice restrains them from associating with others because of difference of opinion. It enters the wide field of politics without fear, and states its claims with perspicuity. If the Rationalist does not ask "rights" *he does not invalidate the demand of those who do*. Choosing to take a shorter course he raises no discussions about the means, but at once claims the end. Rights are the hobgoblins of governments. Legislators fear them as an unknown evil. They want to know what will be done with them. Government would grant any rights if they knew that they would never be exercised. Political Rationalists define their claims. They say, "give us employment or prepare to support us without—give us a sufficiency of good wholesome food unless you will rob the artizan of his hire and leave us a prey to disease—leave us leisure that we may get education and enjoy life unless you would have us ignorant and unhappy—grant us freedom of speech unless you would degrade us into automatons. Thus, legislators, we appeal to you. We raise no question about the technicalities of rights. If we propose new laws you tell us that is your province and we understand it not. But this we do understand, *what we want*. Grant these wants how you may—but grant them." Here all is defined and unmistakable. Thus Rationalism builds on the foundation of the politician, it adds to, not disturbs his appeals.

So it proceeds with the cardinal questions of Free Trade and the Repeal of the Corn Laws. It may modify the means of procedure but it coincides with the results sought. That the golden corn of sunny climes should fill our barns, and our merchandise should grace every cot and palace of the world, is well. In time we shall exchange morality—our calculation for the Turks' hospitality, and our

science for Persian tolerance. Moral merchants will arise, saying we barter goods let us barter sympathies, and as we make the earth grand let us elevate human nature. But the political economy of Rationalism asks why in the mean time must our labourers die, why be trampled down in competition's race? Will that be solid happiness bought with misery and death? Shall we pave the highway of commerce with toil-worn bones? Why not achieve the independence within our reach by the location of our artizans on our untilled land—and learn to live at home? Barter will then be free, no longer as now an imperative necessity that must be pursued at the expense of moral principle—and being free it will be honest. Then the now struggling tradesman will become the easy minister of useful interchanges, and a generous intercourse succeed the selfish triumphs of capital and cunning.

Multiplied illustrations might easily be presented of Rationalism's political procedure, but the instances adduced are sufficient examples. During the acme of the Repeal agitation of Ireland, the oracle of Printing House Square confessed that "Nothing can benefit Ireland except tranquility, and nothing can tranquilize her except the removal of her physical destitution."\* Thus the rational political economy of which I speak would seek to tranquilize those fearful commotions of civilised misery which, if not so calmed, will heave about until the whole fabric is broken to pieces.

*Tail's Magazine* long ago admitted that the kind of remedies, in the last few pages alluded to, constituted the "creed of the working classes" of this country, and the interest they feel in them must every hour increase. On the continent, in America, indeed the world over, the effects of machinery is deepening the impression. The industrious artizans have a destroying enemy before and a devouring

element behind them. In their front is iron, merciless capital grinding them down\*—behind is yawning destitution waiting to swallow them up. The desperate cry of war is too tame for them to ejaculate. "We will conquer, or die," is the stern resolution of the warrior—he has a choice, retreat is open to him, but for the artizan there is none—he *must* conquer or he *will* die whether he would or not.

In conclusion it will not be out of place to advert to the great increase of parties in late years, as it is a fruitful cause of despondency among reformers of note and worth, and also among the friends of Rationalism. The present presumptuous rage for universalism is defeating its ill-founded hopes. May it not be that social elevation depends more on well doing than on *one* doing? Is it not as morally unlikely as it is physically impossible that all the nations of the earth should reach the great goal of progression by one route? The observing know that as knowledge has spread parties have increased. No sooner did Luther comprehend the moral dignity of private judgment, than forthwith old Romanism was split in twain. Calvin advancing in the love of greater simplicity divided the Protestant Church. George Fox fearing to trust the security of mansions in the skies to heavenly house agents, recommended men to become their own priests, and forthwith Quakerism arose. Wesley, annexing benevolence to his creed, announced general redemption, and created a new party. Unitarianism, coupling philosophy with faith, multiplied sects in its instance, and by its example. In politics the same has taken place. In 1832 Thomas Attwood established a powerful Union to obtain the meagre counts of the Reform Bill. Shortly after O'Con-

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\* The writer is not railing at machinery, but at its misdirection. He knows that "Manchester on Monday morning at half-past five, in the rushing off of its thousand mills, like the boom of an Atlantic tide, and its 10,000 times 10,000 spools and spindles, is perhaps as sublime as Niagara, or more so. Cotton spinning is the clothing of the naked in its result: the triumph of man over matter in its means. Soot and despair are divisible from it."—*Carlyle*.

nor popularised the "Five Points" and Attwood's Union was broken up. Complete Suffrage came with new proposals, and made a new division. Mr. Owen by his new views assisted in disbanding Trades' Unions, and Rationalism has thinned the ranks of politicians. Thus every advance in information draws off old adherents who form new parties. The fact is, and the sooner we perceive it the better, the order of progression has changed. The bird of destiny is no longer a fowl of monotonous colour, but a bird of variegated plumage. Reason is appearing as the *representative* of men, and physical array is no longer necessary. Sidney Smith, alone by his letters, recently awakened both the old world and the new to the impolicy of repudiation—and did more with his pen than British arms accomplished in the late American war. No question but that a few, strong in the sense of utility, will be able to accomplish more than it formerly required a nation to effect. No fear need be entertained that parties will be so multiplied that governments will be perplexed, and that the competition of project with project will defeat advancement. There is a natural limit to their rise. Now a hundred papers throw a hundred eyes on every new proposal and expose its fallacy, if fallacy it has, in a hundred different lights. As public opinion advances the frivolous pretender will sure to be hunted down by earnest men. As many objects only as are sound will be pursued—and if the number be great, so much the better, for the wider then will be the activity of intellect. The dawn of a brighter day will not be less welcome because hailed by many voices.







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